

Beckham Loses Bid for Lawyer

5-1 2-15-68

Reluctant Probe Figure Testifies



—Stokes-Horn photo.
THOMAS E. BECKHAM, left, the reluctant witness from Omaha, Neb., confers with A. ROSWELL THOMPSON, many times candidate for mayor of New Orleans, prior to Beckham's appearance before the Orleans Parish Grand Jury today.

Entertainer-evangelist Thomas E. Beckham reluctantly went before the Orleans Parish Grand Jury today after a Criminal Court judge ordered him to testify in the Kennedy assassination probe.

Beckham entered the jury room about 10:45 a. m., minutes after he lost a bid to have an attorney accompany him during the questioning.

The cowboy singer from Omaha, Neb., acting as his own attorney, filed a motion with Judge Matthew S. Braniff seeking to

if he told the truth.

"But it'll be behind closed doors," Beckham protested.

Judge Braniff instructed a deputy sheriff to accompany Beckham to the corridor outside the jury room.

There he waited until Garrison made a brief appearance before the jury.

In his original subpoena for Beckham, Garrison alleged that the singer was an associate of the late David W. Ferrie, a key figure in Garrison's investigation and identified by the DA as one of the men who conspired to kill the President in Dallas in 1963.

THE SUBPENA identified Beckham and Ferrie both as ordained priests in the "old Orthodox Catholic Church of North America." The document further alleged that Beckham was in Dallas in November of 1963.

The witness, after being ordered by an Omaha court to testify here, was granted a delay on Feb. 1 on grounds that he needed time to confer with his lawyer, newly

prevent his appearance before the jury on the grounds that his civil rights would be violated.

HE CLAIMED he knows nothing about the Kennedy assassination and said he feared he was being framed by District Attorney Jim Garrison and Jack Martin, a self-styled private investigator.

Judge Braniff denied the motion, contending that the witness had nothing to fear

See PROBE—Page 4

elected state Rep. Edward H. Booker.

But today, he entered court without counsel, accompanied by A. Roswell Thompson, a multi-times candidate for mayor and other offices.

Beckham told the court he drew up the legal document himself in a restaurant after conferring with an attorney. It was labeled a "request for restraining order on personal appearance without counsel."

HE CLAIMED he was told by the Omaha court that he would not be forced to incriminate himself, but now finds that incrimination of himself before the Orleans jury is possible.

Judge Braniff asked the witness who would act as his attorney if he granted the motion. Beckham replied that he thought the court would supply him with an attorney. Beckham indicated he planned to cite the Fifth Amendment if he were asked questions that he believed would incriminate him.